

The Human Side

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES • SPRING 2003

The mission of the Georgia Department of Human Resources is to assist Georgians in achieving healthy, independent and self-sufficient lives.

Protecting Georgians Against Health Threats

Nearly a year ago, the Division of Public Health (PH) received \$23.2 million from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to strengthen PH's ability to respond to the threat of bioterrorism, and \$3.4 million from the Health Resource Services Administration (HRSA) for hospital community preparedness. In the last year, PH has used these resources to build on preparedness efforts that have been underway since 1999. By enhancing staff at the state and local levels and working closely with partners throughout government and health communities, PH continues to improve the state's ability to respond to a variety of public health threats – from SARS and West Nile virus to bioterrorism to floods and tornadoes.

In the 19 PH districts throughout the state, 18 now have emergency coordinators, 17 have hired public information officers/risk communicators and 17 have hired training coordinators with the bioterrorism grant. These new staff are working with new district epidemiologists and pharmacy coordinators. All these staff are critical links between the state, counties, and districts and our partners, including the Georgia Office of Homeland Security.

"One of the most challenging aspects of emergency response is coordination," explained PH Director **Kathleen E. Toomey, MD, MPH**. "By developing and testing response



plans and keeping the daily lines of communication open among the many partners in the response community, the new staff at the local and state level build the relationships necessary to prepare for public health emergencies."

A critical part of coordinated local preparedness is working with state and federal partners to improve planning and response. There are now two emergency preparedness coordinators and a public health exercise coordinator in the state Office of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma (EMS), as well as new pharmacy, laboratory, epidemiology, nursing and public information staff and other new EMS staff.

"The foundation of the federal bioterrorism preparedness is dual functionality," said State Epidemiologist **Paul Blake, M.D., M.PH**. "This means that every day, Public Health becomes better able to respond to more familiar issues like bacterial

meningitis and food-borne disease outbreaks as well as emerging diseases like SARS, West Nile virus and the potential threat of bioterrorism."

The key to continued preparedness, according to Toomey, is maintaining a well-trained staff. In the near future, the current emergency response capabilities of staff will be reviewed. It will be the basis of a work plan to continually improve the staff's ability to respond to

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Commissioner's Corner

DHR, the war, and preparedness at home

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has taken steps to protect its citizens from terrorism. Currently, the nation is engaged in military operations in Iraq. At home, our nation is working to protect citizens through domestic preparedness programs coordinated by the national and state offices of homeland security. I would like to mention some of the ways DHR is contributing to these efforts.

First, with regard to the war in Iraq, 50 DHR staff are on military leave and are serving in the armed forces – most in the Middle East.

One former DHR employee, **Rick Berry**, has been serving in Kuwait since November 2002. He retired in 2000 as assistant to the director of the Office of Technology and Support, with 32 years of service. Rick is now a Command Sergeant Major in the 335th Theater Signal Command. Many will remember Rick's key role in planning for public safety for the Olympics and for Y2K.

When Rick told friends at DHR that soldiers needed some personal items to make them a little more comfortable, many people at Two Peachtree made contributions. Seventeen 150-pound boxes were shipped to Kuwait on April 14. Federal Express provided the service free of charge.

At home, DHR protects Georgians when disasters such as floods and hurricanes strike. We have an ongoing responsibility to prevent and control outbreaks of disease. It is natural, then, that DHR would play an important role in protecting



Georgians from terrorism. DHR works with the Georgia Task Force on Homeland Security, the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and the federal Centers for Disease Control in a number of important ways:

DHR's Division of Public Health plays a key role in combating bioterrorism. Bioterrorism planning and implementation began before 9/11 and the program is recognized as a national leader in the area of emergency response. The division has worked closely with hospitals, trauma centers and providers to see that we are ready in the event of a chemical or biological emergency.

The Division of Public Health also implements the Georgia Smallpox Immunization Plan. Smallpox vaccinations were administered to staff at 15 trauma centers and acute care hospitals in the first phase of the plan.

Other divisions of DHR are involved in emergency preparedness as well. The Division of Family and Children Services helps provide emergency shelters for people displaced by disasters. The division's community service section participates in the National Repatriation Plan, which would help Americans abroad return to the United States in the event of a threat to their safety. The Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases offers crisis counseling services to people suffering emotional trauma due to disaster.

As Commissioner, I am proud of the members of the DHR team who serve our country in its armed forces and the members of the team who work every day to protect Georgians from disease and disaster.

Jim Martin

"You'd be glad to know that all (the packages from DHR), except for a couple for Red Cross, are on their way north to soldiers in our camps. The items are just what soldiers want, need and can't find locally. Thanks so much for bringing a little bit of home to our soldiers and me. Tell everyone we appreciate them and their support." -- Command Sergeant Rick Berry, retired DHR employee, now serving at Ft. Dotha, Kuwait.



DHR Gives Big, Wins Big

DHR won a Governor's Award for increasing our contributions to the 2002-3 State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) by more than \$10,000 over the previous year, and a Georgia Merit System Commissioner's Award for the highest contribution per employee in an agency with more than 9,001 employees. We contributed a total of \$310,340, topping both our goal of \$300,000 and last year's contribution of \$299,324. However, just under 25 percent of DHR employees contributed.

SCCP is a once-yearly opportunity for state employees to contribute to their choice of good causes from a long and varied list of charities throughout Georgia. The charities on the list have been carefully screened and approved by the SCCP advisory committee. The drive is held in October and includes many enjoyable events organized by different offices, such as bake sales and raffles.

"Rosa Waymon and the members of her team did a great job," said Commissioner Jim Martin, "I am proud of the response they



(l to r) Karen Handel, deputy chief of staff, Governor's Office; Carl Patton, general SCCP campaign chair; Rosa Waymon, OHRM director and DHR campaign chair; Melody Williams, coordinator for Office of Facilities and Support Services; Carol Hall, coordinator for Division of Aging Services; Jim Martin, DHR commissioner; Linda Joyce Parker, DHR campaign coordinator; Debhora Johnson, coordinator for Office of Information Technology.

received from the people in our department. Many of the groups that benefit from our contributions work with our department to meet the needs of the citizens of Georgia. These organizations augment DHR programs, especially in this time of budget cuts. I hope that this October we can increase the number of DHR employees who contribute, and beat our record again."

Rosa Waymon, director of the Office of Human Resource Manage-

ment, was DHR campaign chair; Robert Riddle, director of the Office of Child Support Enforcement, was co-chair; and Linda Joyce Parker of Human Resource and Organization Development served as the DHR campaign coordinator. Next year Dennis Yarman, director of HROD, and Rosa Waymon will be co-chairs and Linda J. Parker will again be DHR campaign coordinator.

— Linda Joyce Parker and Barbara Joye

Protecting Georgians Against Health Threats continued from page 1

emergencies. State and district training coordinators throughout DHR will use a new learning management system to put together programs to train staff in critical areas.

A generalized response plan for PH was completed this year. The Public Health Emergency Response Plan (PHERP) looks at detection, identification, and response to health emergencies. It identifies essential public health services, and provides a guide for the 19 health districts as they prepare their own

plans for response. PHERP also provides a foundation for other plans that are being developed, including an airport disease outbreak plan and the Strategic National Stockpile plan.

Currently, the HRSA funding is being used to assess preparedness of Georgia's hospitals, EMS providers and community health centers in each of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency's eight designated areas.

Georgians have already seen

many benefits from the state's enhanced public health infrastructure. New health threats like West Nile virus, anthrax and SARS demonstrate the need for an all-hazards approach to public health preparedness. Next year, PH will receive \$22 million from the CDC and \$13.7 million from HRSA. The continued funding will allow PH, DHR and partners to continue improving the state's ability to respond to emerging health threats.

— Richard Quartarone

Newborn Screening Expands

Over 30 years ago, DHR made a commitment to screen Georgia's newborns for disorders that cause mental retardation or death if not found and treated. Currently, we screen for eight such disorders. Beginning in May 2003, screening for biotinidase will be added. Screening for MCAD requires new equipment and special training for staff and will begin in early 2004.

A new technology, tandem mass spectrometry, now makes it possible to screen for MCAD and it could be used for several other conditions as well. The Newborn Screening Program is being expanded through a partnership with the Division of Public Health, the March of Dimes (Georgia Chapter) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Hospitals collect the blood samples and send them to the Public Health laboratory for testing. The Division of Public Health is also responsible for monitoring, education, training and evaluation of the newborn screening system.

An estimated one in every 1,500 babies is born with a disorder that can be detected by a newborn screening test. As more information from research becomes available, we may add other treatable disorders in the future. Until that time, parents can pay private laboratories to screen for these other disorders.

Educational materials including a fact sheet listing the ten disorders screened in Georgia, posters and an expanded web site for both providers and parents will be available soon. Contact **Mary Ann Henson** at mahenson@dhr.state.ga.us or 404-657-6357 for more information.

— Barbara Joye

Bridging the Gap

PH staff learn medical interpretation, cultural competency

The Laurens County Health Department has pioneered a medical interpreter training program, "Bridging the Gap," that is now available statewide. The program seeks to show the relevance of cultural competency to health care services, to help DHR staff better serve clients who cannot effectively communicate in English. Originally developed in Seattle, it covers diversity, cultural competency, self-assessment, culturally and linguistically-appropriate health care, and the culture of western biomedicine as well as medical interpretation.

Nurse Manager **Kathy Jeffers, R.N.**, recruited a training team that includes **Nadua Watson** and **Nancy King**, both Latinas. To date, Laurens County's team has trained about 100 interpreters in cultural competency and medical terminology. Jeffers just retired from the health department after a 32-year career and now directs Language Links to Healthier Families, a nonprofit educational organization that will continue to conduct Bridging the Gap workshops.

The training was held in Dublin and Macon last year. In 2003, it will be offered to health professionals in the metro Atlanta, northeast and northwest Georgia districts, as part of DHR's compliance with Title VI federal guidelines of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The DHR Office of Communications is working with the Laurens County Health Department to promote enrollment. To qualify for the five-day session, students must speak English and one other language.

For more information contact **Kathy Jeffers**, 478-275-0569 or **Linda Montgomery** at the Laurens County Health Department, 2121 Bellevue Road, Dublin, GA 31021 or 478-272-2051, or visit the DHR website: www.dhr.georgia.gov (click on "multicultural activities") or e-mail aflores@dhr.state.ga.us

— Antonio Flores

New MHDDAD Regional Directors

The Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD) has named new regional coordinators (RCs) for the seven new regions that replaced the 13 MHDDAD regions last fall. New regions were mandated by HB 498, which was passed by the legislature in 2002.

The new regional coordinators are senior-level managers responsible for planning, contracting for and providing needed services and monitoring quality. They are responsible for both state hospital and community services, and for integrating the two into a single system that is easy for people to access. The RCs also build relationships in the regions to

support MHDDAD services and enlist resources outside the division, such as employment opportunities and housing for MHDDAD consumers.

The new regional coordinators are: North Region – **Charles Fetner**; East Central Region – **Jack Gronewald**; Metro Region – **Earnestine Pittman**; West Central Region – **Greg Hoyt**; Central Region – **Ralph McCuin**; Southwest Region – **David Sofferin**; Southeast Region – **Rosa Kamson**.

For more information about the system changes at MHDDAD, go to www2.state.ga.us/departments/dhr/mhmrta/index.html.

— Iris McIlvaine

Fighting Fraud

DHR's Office of Investigative Services has the best record in the Southeast for tracking down benefit fraud. They've ranked number one among southern states for the past three years in the number of successful cases they've brought against people who claimed more food stamps than they were eligible to receive, and in the amount of money they've reclaimed. In the first quarter of FY 2003 they established almost \$1,500,000 in

food stamp fraud claims and as a result DFCS was able to recover \$624,000.

Gayle Morgan Allen is an investigator for the South Metro region. She recently won her first trial by jury against a woman who had lied about the number of cars she owned in order to receive \$4,000 more in food stamps than she was entitled to. When the county DFCS staff found out she had a second car they asked her about it, but she kept denying that

she owned it. "That repeated denial showed intent," said Allen. Most people charged with benefit fraud go to a negotiating body known as the Prosecuting Attorney's Council (PAC), but this recipient chose a jury trial.

"I wasn't sure whether the jury would understand, but they found her guilty," said Allen, "and I found out that citizens aren't sympathetic with cheaters, because it's their tax money." The accused was sentenced to repay the \$4,000 plus court costs within three years and do community service while serving three years' probation. The PAC process would probably have resulted in a lighter sentence, such as a five-year payback period without court costs, probation or a criminal record.

Allen had to recommend the case for prosecution, present the evidence, and testify. It is just one of the challenges of her job, which sends her out in the field for most of the week. Asked the secret of her success, she replied: "Dedication and hard work. We have to be disciplined and focused, to verify the information we receive from local DFCS staff. We're a team."

— Barbara Joye

GEORGIA CARES Saves \$19 Million



GeorgiaCares holds "brown bag" events like this one at the Houston County Senior Center. People bring in their medications and are counseled by volunteers to make sure they are taking them correctly. Here Boyd Collier, a Walgreens pharmacist, helps Estella Shepard review her prescriptions.

Everyday there are seniors in this state who struggle to pay for their prescription medications. Some may even have to choose between medicine and food. The Division of Aging Services offers help for these seniors through GeorgiaCares, a state health insurance program for Medicare beneficiaries. The program, which also includes the Senior Medicare Patrol and Health Insurance Counseling Assistance and Referral for the Elderly (HICARE) helps eligible older Georgians enroll in low-cost prescription drug programs and also helps them understand and solve problems related to Medicare and other health care issues. GeorgiaCares has already saved Georgia seniors \$19 million since July 2002.

To qualify for the GeorgiaCares program individuals must be covered by Medicare, not have prescription drug coverage of any kind, and must earn \$18,000 or less annually, or \$24,000 in the case of couples. People whose income is slightly higher may still qualify for a discount. Medicare recipients can call the toll-free GeorgiaCares number, 1-800-669-8387, for help from a trained volunteer. Also, volunteers are still needed; to sign up, call the same number.

— Lola Russell

SEE YOUR STORY IN PRINT

The Human Side would like to broaden our coverage to include more stories written by DHR employees. We are looking for success stories, stories about innovative programs, or anything about your work that would interest others throughout the department. We would especially appreciate news from other parts of the state. Length: Up to two pages typed double space. We will edit for style and brevity. Please send your story, or any question you may have about writing for The Human Side, to Barbara Joye at brjoye@dhr.state.ga.us.

GDHR Employees of the Year

Leading up to the Georgia Merit System's second annual Public Employees' Recognition Week, May 5 - 11, DHR presented our own array of awards to star staff on April 30. Commissioner **Jim Martin** announced that two of DHR's awardees were also statewide winners. They were honored at Governor Perdue's proclamation and awards ceremony on May 7 in Atlanta. DHR held a variety of activities to recognize employees throughout the week.

"I wish I could give awards to each member of the DHR team," said Commissioner Martin. "I value the contribution of every DHR employee."

Jane Stitcher, program assistant for Wilkes County DFCS, won both the statewide and DHR Customer Service awards. She has consistently provided excellent customer service, even learning both sign language and Spanish in order to communicate better with clients. She also prepares a quarterly staff newsletter "loaded with motivational and inspirational information."

Laura Lee, a Child Support Enforcement agent, won both the statewide and DHR awards for Innovations/Suggestions by developing a worksheet that allowed CSE staff to carry out their newly-mandated task of calculating interest on child support arrears without having to purchase new software.

Other DHR winners were:

Team Award – Craft of Effective Customer Service Team, Office of Human Resources and Organizational Development (**Henry Carter**, **Donna Lloyd**, **Clyde Beckley**, **William Warren**, **Julie Reid**, **Robert**



(l to r, back row) **Henry Carter**, HROD; **William Warren**, HROD; **Clyde Beckley**, HROD; **Ed Simmons**, HROD; (front row) Commissioner **Jim Martin**; **Jane Stitcher**, Wilkes County DFCS; **Barbara Hastings**, Warner Robins CSE; **Taunya Lowe**, MHDDAD; **Laura Lee**, Region 12 CSE; **Carole Jakeway**, Office of Nursing, PH.

Taylor, Antoinette Bonton, and Edward Simmons and Angel Rodriguez, Office of Communications.) They developed and implemented an innovative training program that helps DHR staff in any program improve 20 customer service skills. Over 800 staff completed the course in 2002.

Heroism Award – **Barbara Hastings**, legal secretary for the Warner Robbins Office of Child Support and Enforcement, saved the life of a fellow worker by performing the Heimlich maneuver.

Leadership Award – **Carole Jakeway**, chief nurse, Division of Public Health, initiated a process for improving and assuring the quality of public health nursing, now in its fourth year; developed policies for operating emergency shelters for people with special needs; and launched the Georgia Nurse Alert System, which enlists volunteer nurses to care for people in emergencies, the first such service in the United States.

Community Service Award – **Taunya Lowe**, state women's addic-

tive disease coordinator for the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases, guided the development of 79 women's substance abuse treatment services. These included residential services tailored especially for women – the first in Georgia where mothers can bring their children under 13 to treatment with them. Recently, she has begun developing services for women receiving TANF who have mental health and developmental disabilities.

Safety Award – **Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H.**, director, Division of Public Health, is the medical representative on the Governor's Homeland Security Task Force and is recognized nationally as an expert in this field. Among many programs under her leadership that protect the health and safety of Georgians, she has directed measures to prepare Public Health to respond to a bioterrorism attack, including anthrax response and smallpox vaccination, and has coordinated the response to E.coli contamination.

– Barbara Joye

Who's News



Connie Brown, program associate for the Dalton health district's Emergency Medical Services, won first prize in the Georgia Public Health Association's annual photography contest, for this shot of her granddaughter Ashlyn Brown and Stephen West, a paramedic with the Laurens County Emergency Medical Services who will soon be Connie's son-in-law. She captioned the photo: "Responding to every health need is Public Health's challenge."

Ariane Reeves, RN, BSN, CIC, infection control nurse for the DeKalb Board of Health, received the 2003 Sellers-McCroan award jointly sponsored by the Georgia Public Health Association and the Division of Public Health, recognizing outstanding achievement and service to Georgians in the fields of epidemiology and/or laboratory-science. Reeves created DeKalb's surveillance system for West Nile virus that now serves as the basis for bioterrorism detection for the district.



Jennifer Plair of Cook County DFCS was honored as the "Family Service Worker of the Year 2002." **Daphne Hollingsworth** and **Rebecca Davis**, both Chatham County DFCS, won second place and third place, respectively. DFCS family service workers provide home-based, supportive services to families who receive adult or child protective services, children who are in foster care placement, foster parents, and birth

parents; help recruit and train prospective foster and adoptive parents; and help collect and deliver food, clothing, and toys to needy families at Thanksgiving and Christmas.



The You Make it Happen awards were given to a DFCS Child Care and Parent Services staff person in each region who demonstrated exceptional casework skills and a consistent commitment to providing services to families receiving or looking for childcare assistance: **Teresa Stephenson**, Walker County; **Joanie Cathey**, Stephens County; **Audrey Miller**, Fulton County; **Jearlynn Weaver**, Douglas County; **Cynthia Chini**, Carroll County; **Emily Coleman**, Clarke County; **Janice Bryant**, Bibb County; **Elizabeth Bartles**, McDuffie County; **Mary Harris**, Macon County; **Peggy Snow**, Toombs County; **Kathy Howell** and **Denise Parker**, Decatur County; **Ginny Odom**, Cook County; and **Jenny Bunkley**, Glynn County.

Project coordinators or their designees were honored for helping implement the MAXSTAR system, a new childcare provider payment and management system: **Chris McGowan**, Appling County; **Louise Ivey**, Barrow County; **Janice Bryant**, Bibb County; **Julie Cole**, Carroll County; **Mary R. Hodges**, Chatham County; **Cynthia Doctor**, Chatham County; **Kirk Chaney**, Clarke County; **Gwynne Howard**, Clayton County; **Rosa Williamson**, Coffee County; **Don Arnold**, Cook County; **Ginny Odom**, Cook County; **Leigh Bennett-Conner**, DeKalb County; **Martha Hines**, Dougherty County; **Jearlyn Weaver**, Douglas County; **Mary Nell Harrell**,

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Jeff Wilder (pictured) jokes that he loves his home county so much he asks his wife to feed him a tablespoon of Henry County dirt every day. Photo by Cameron Adams, with permission from the Henry County Neighbor.

Jeff Wilder, community resource specialist for the Henry County Department of Family and Children Services, was named Henry County Person of the Year by the Henry County Chamber of Commerce. He is also a preacher at McDonough Church of Christ, a member of the YMCA board, a commissioner with the McDonough Housing Authority, a Friend's House volunteer, chairman of the board of Connecting Henry, a Chamber of Commerce board member, a volunteer chaplain at Henry Medical Center and a member of Main Street McDonough.

Who's news *continued from page 6*

Emanuel County; Judy Oliver, Evans County; Tony Corn, Franklin County; Maggie Glover, Fulton County; Jeanine Carson, Glynn County; Julius Abdullah, Gwinnett County; Deborah Paulk, Hall County; Judy Jones, Haralson County; Joann Aaron, Houston County; Jean Johnson, Jefferson County; Sandra Cullen, Muscogee County; Tina Starks, Richmond County; David Hall, Screven County; Lynn Cook, Spalding County.



Division of Aging Services director **Maria Greene** received the "Martha Eaves Award" from the Office of the State Long-term Care Ombudsman (LTCO). This award recognizes an individual who is not an ombudsman but who has made "extraordinary and continuing efforts to strengthen the program in Georgia." LTCO advocates for residents of nursing homes and personal care homes to help them resolve problems with services and benefits. As the former director of the Georgia



(l to r) Wendy Bailey-Parks, Energy Program consultant; Governor Sonny Perdue; Joyce B. Hull, Energy Program unit chief; and Gary Bussey, DFCS Community Services Section director accepted a contribution of \$100,000 from Atlanta Gas Light Resources for DHR's Low Income Energy Assistance Program.

Council on Aging, Greene advocated for increased funding for the program. Since she became division director she reorganized LTCO and has kept ombudsmen informed of issues affecting residents.



Khayriyyah Faiz was honored with the Outstanding Alumna Award of the Atlanta Inter-Alumni Council of the United Negro Col-

lege Fund, for her work as director of the Fulton Collaborative Crisis Service System, which includes Georgia Regional Hospital in Atlanta, Grady Community Mental Health, Fulton County's Department of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases, and Northside Mental Health. Faiz is a graduate of Xavier University in New Orleans. The award is given to graduates of historically black colleges and universities who make quality contributions to their community.



What's News

At El Dia de la Mujer Latina's annual health fair in Atlanta, women sign up for free cancer screenings donated by volunteers from public and private providers, one of many health services offered at the popular event.



El Dia de la Mujer Latina (DML) – Day of the Latin American Woman – a nonprofit Latino health organization, presented its "State Agency en Acción" award to DHR, in recognition of the department's outstanding commitment to reducing health disparities in the Latino community by improving services to refugees and immigrants during 2002. This was DML's first award to a government agency.

The purpose of *The Human Side* is to provide interesting and important information related to DHR employees and their jobs.

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